LESTER SWEYD COLLECTION

LESTER SWEYD COLLECTION

ARCHIE SELWYN

presents

SYBIL THORNDIKE

as "Nurse Cavell"

in

"DAWN"

A HERBERT WILCOX PRODUCTION.

Directed by HERBERT WILCOX.

Story by Capt. REGINALD BERKELEY.

THE PLAYERS:

Nurse Cavell	SYBIL THORNDIKE
Madame Ada Bodart	MADAME BODART
Phillipe Bodart	GORDON CRAIG
Madame Rappard	MARIE AULT
Her Son, Jacques	MICKY BRANTFORD
Madame Pitou	MARY BROUGH
Jean (her husband)	RICHARD WORTH
Widow Deveaux	COLIN BELL
Her Daughter	DACIA DEANE
Col. Schultz	CECIL BARRY
German A.P.M.	HADDON MASON
British Airman	MAURICE BRADDELL
Lutheran Priest	EDWARD O'NEILL
President of the Court Martial	GRIFFITH HUMPHREY

LESTER SWEYD COLLECTION

Sybil Thorndike as "Nurse Cavell"

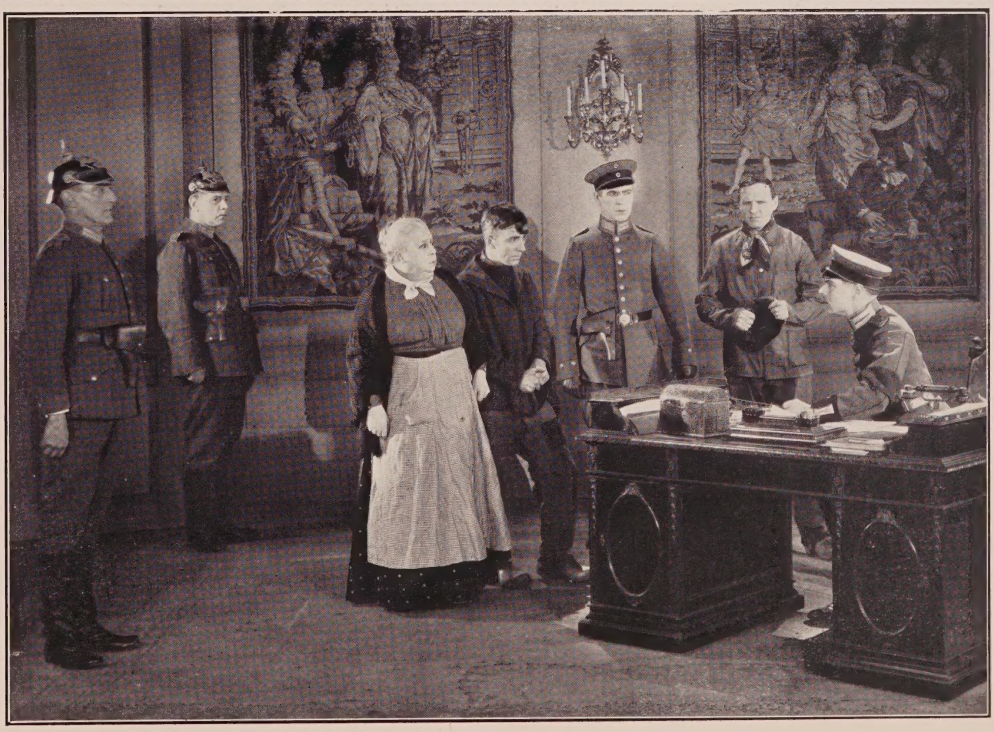
in

"DAWN"

HERBERT WILCOX
PRODUCTION

DIRECTED BY
HERBERT WILCOX

Story by
Capt Reginald Berkeley



The Story of the Film.

IN the early days of 1914—and for several years before—Nurse Edith Cavell had been at the head of a Nursing Institute in the Rue de la Culture, Brussels. It was a monument to her untiring energy, no less than to her desire to do her trust for the sick and the suffering.

Perhaps the most cherished moment of the day was when she spent an hour with the children she loved, and they looked upon her not as a stern grown-up but as a friend and playmate to whom they could run with their childish troubles.

It was not, therefore, surprising, when one morning a youngster wearing a Uhlan helmet, and armed with a wooden sword, chased a smaller boy, who wore a Belgian chasseur's cap, that the latter should run into Nurse Cavell's private sitting-room, where she was awaiting breakfast.

She entered thoroughly into the spirit of the game: quickly she hid the little one behind the ample folds of her skirt, then stood erect, in time to greet the "Uhlan," who demanded to know where his "enemy" was.

"You had better search," was her reply, and the youngster proceeded to do so. So well hidden was the other youngster, that he failed to discover him.

Then came the war. And with it the occupation of Brussels. Many sought safety in flight. Nurse Cavell, realising that this was the time when her services, and those of her nurses would be most needed, freely offered the use of her hospital to German as well as Allied wounded, and remained herself in charge.

Among her acquaintances was a widow, a Madame Rappard, whose son, a mere stripling, was fighting in the Belgian ranks. When the German tide rolled on, the boy, like a piece of human wreckage, was left high and dry.

With a companion he managed to escape the vigilance of the Germans, but a sentry was killed. His companion was caught—and summarily shot. Jacques Rappard, hunted, homeless, starving, sought refuge in his mother's shop.

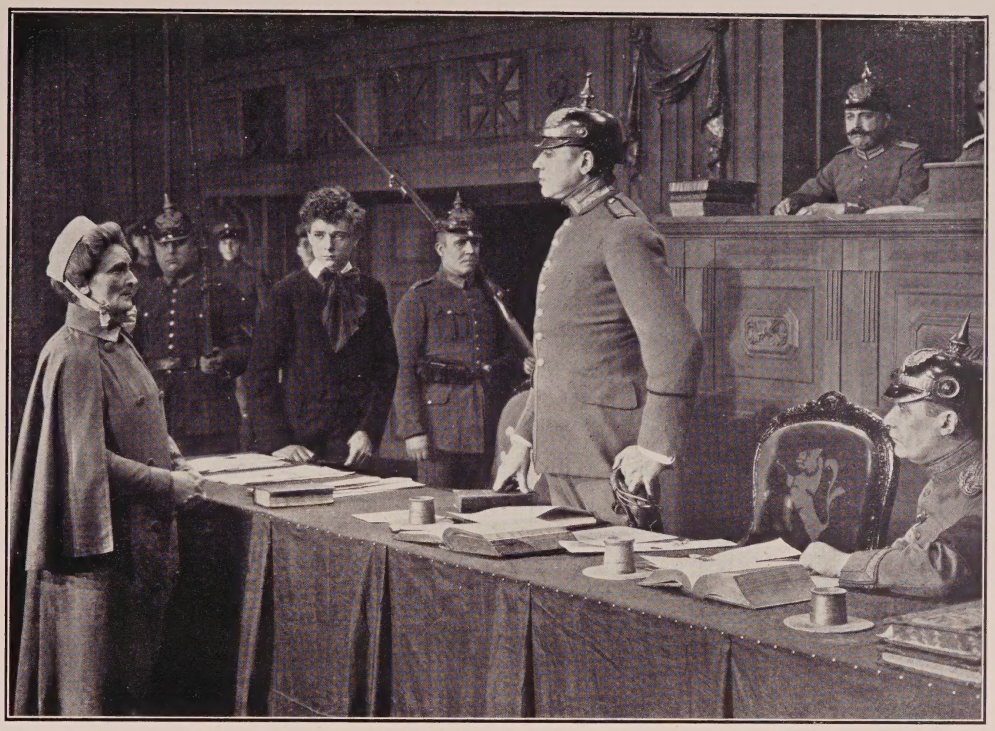
Nurse Cavell was inside making some purchases when the boy dashed in. Breathlessly he tells his mother the story. . . . "If I'm caught," he sobs . . . "they—they" . . . The mother's imagination can supply the rest of that dread sentence.

What is she to do? Nurse Cavell comes into the little sitting-room, closing the door to behind her. And at that moment a German billeting party arrives outside the shop!

The distracted mother hides her boy in a linen cupboard, and returns to the sitting-room, more dead than alive. In a half-fainting condition she sees the German officer's shadow on the glass door . . . and as he enters, overwrought she falls to the ground unconscious.

Nurse Cavell quickly succours her. "I'm billeting," the officer announces. "How many can you take?" Nurse Cavell looks down at the unconscious figure, then back at him. "Four," she answers quietly, and goes on with her efforts to restore the widow to consciousness.

Four stalwart privates enter the shop. "Jacques cannot stay here, it is not safe," Nurse Cavell tells the



widow softly. "I'll tell him that I'll come back a little later and take him to my house."

While one of the German soldiers is snoring fitfully in an armchair that same night, Nurse Cavell enters, takes Jacques with her to the hospital, and there provides him with a peasant's costume, burning his uniform in the great stove in her cellar.

Madame Rappard, torn with anxiety, is waiting on the Germans billeted in her house. Suddenly she hears one of them explain that there is to be a house-to-house search for refugees. She hastily puts down the coffee-pot and rushes off to Nurse Cavell.

The latter soothes her, and between them they hide Jacques in a small wine cellar leading off the main cellar. They pull an old, dilapidated wardrobe over the door to hide it.

The Germans search, but find nothing. When they have gone, Nurse Cavell tells the widow to go home, and that she will find a way out. She goes to see another good friend in Madame Pitou, aboard the latter's barge at Malines.

Despite an outwardly aggressive exterior—and the cares of looking after a dull-witted husband—Madame Pitou has the courage of a lion. Her husband refuses to listen to Miss Cavell's suggestion that they shall secrete Jacques Rappard aboard the barge and so get him across the frontier. Madame Pitou not only agrees, but when the boy comes aboard, and the Germans as usual search the barge at the frontier, by her quick-wittedness she prevents them from continuing to search the hold where Jacques is hidden in a brandy cask.

Nurse Cavell has written a postcard—framed innocently, which was to be posted when the boy was safe. Madame Pitou gets one of the Germans to post it for her!

While Madame Rappard is sobbing out her gratitude, Nurse Cavell sees a vision of the hundreds of other homeless and starving refugees, of whom Jacques has told her, and she determines to aid them.

From that sprang the organisation which aided these human derelicts. With the aid of Madame Rappard, Madame Pitou, and last but not least, Madame Ada Bodart—who leads the refugees from Nurse Cavell's house to the trams—Nurse Cavell manages to succour many a homeless soldier.

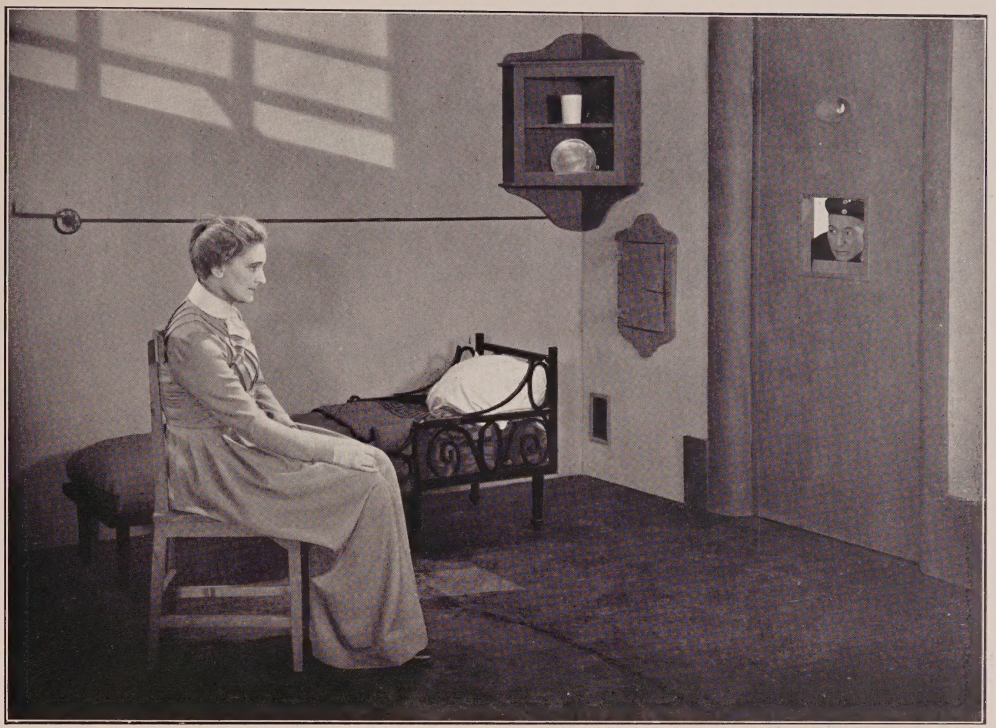
But the German authorities are growing desperate because of the continued escape of refugees. Colonel Schultz, the chief of their military police, gets a severe wigging from Von Sauberzweig, the newly appointed Military Governor of the city.

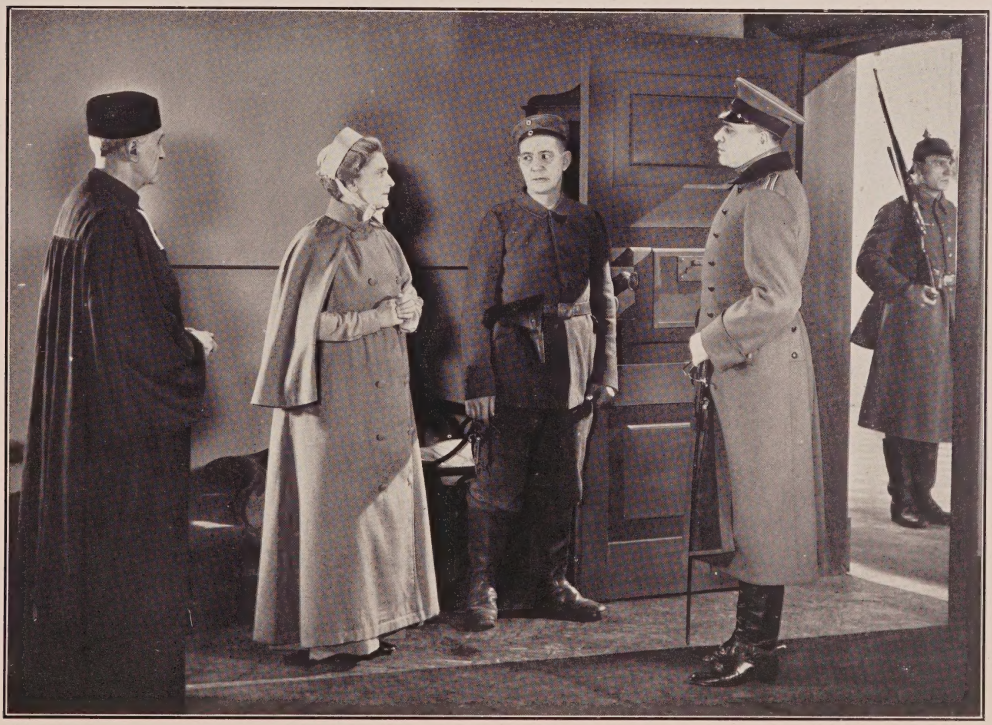
"If you value your job, look to it!" he warns the crestfallen Schultz. The latter goes back to his office and sits trying to puzzle out just how the escapes are being accomplished.

Then he remembers that, in the early days of the occupation, he had told the English Nurse Cavell that she would be expected to make herself responsible for the behaviour of her enemy patients—and had indignantly refused to act as gaoler.

As the thought recurs, he starts up, and accompanied by two of his men, searches her house. But Nurse Cavell when he is announced presses with her foot the bell push, secreted beneath the carpet, warns the refugees in the big cellar below of danger, and they rush to the safety of the smaller cellar, with the screening wardrobe so placed that no one would suspect that it covered a door.

Schultz searches, but finds no one. Yet he feels sure that Nurse Cavell, for all her unruffled air, is hiding





refugees. The danger passed, Nurse Cavell got all her refugees safely over the frontier, and for a time no more came to the Rue de la Culture.

Then a British airman, brought down in flames, crawls from the wreckage of his blazing machine to a cottage. The Belgian tenants—mother and daughter—are terrified. To succour the aviator, meant the death penalty.

The daughter goes for Nurse Cavell, and the boy is taken to her hospital. A watching German A.P.M. sees the ambulance draw up, is suspicious and goes straight to the operating theatre where Nurse Cavell is about to dress the boy's wounds.

He turns down the blanket covering the lad's tunic—there are the wings of the R.F.C.! At that moment the youngster recovers momentary consciousness, turns and looks at Cavell, who smiles reassuringly. The German, touched by the youth's pitiful air, and her courage, stiffens, draws himself to his full height, and with a click of the heels, turns and walks out of the house.

In the meantime, further irritated by the escape of the aviator, the German authorities have tightened their net. They catch one man who tells the whole story to Schultz. "Hidden, in her cellar," he explains. "Why there's an English aviator there now!"

Even while Schultz is searching, the boy gets away, but this time Fate is against the heroic nurse. Schultz finds an incriminating rough sketch of the roads leading to her house in a back entrance . . . the way by which so many derelicts have gone to freedom.

She is arrested, and taken to the prison of St. Gilles. Then comes the trial in the Senate House, Brussels. There can be little doubt of the verdict. The Court adjourns to consider the finding.

Nurse Cavell, alone in her tiny cell, waits . . . until the door opens one evening, and the figure of a Lutheran priest appears. His sad, drawn face tells her why he has come. "When?" she asks. "Dawn," is his reply.

"Can I see an English clergyman?" she asks. This is arranged, and a touching scene follows between the two. Finally, they celebrate Holy Communion together, and end with the priest reciting "Abide with me," Nurse Cavell's voice following his.

"I see," she tells him. "Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone."

The last sad scene is played out in the Tir National. The German escort arrive to take her from the cell to the place of execution. Nurse Cavell, as she leaves, despite her agony of spirit, finds courage to give a sweet smile to the German gaoler who has been kind to her.

Then comes the walk to the place of execution . . . every step nearer to death . . . But one of the firing party, sickened by the brutality of a war that demands the shooting of a woman, has declared when warned for the firing-party that he will not shoot.

"Firing-party ready . . .!"

The command rings out . . . Nurse Cavell, white-faced, but tight-lipped, faces them. . . . The soldier refuses to obey the command. The officer in charge of the party—by a tragic irony of Fate the very man who, when acting as A.P.M., had spared the English nurse—steps forward, asks if he has heard. . . . The private looks straight ahead at the figure of the nurse.

The officer follows his gaze . . . then, because war knows no distinctions between friends and foes if they offend its dread laws . . . he draws his revolver . . . One fleeting glance of the heroic nurse . . . then—

"Some corner of a foreign field, that is for ever England." And the picture ends on the small, wooden cross with "Edith Cavell" written on it . . . and the message that Edith Cavell's sacrifice will not have been in vain, if the lesson she taught can find a place in the heart of mankind.

P.W.B.

SYBIL THORNDIKE

AS

"Nurse Cavell"

IN

"DAWN"

Herbert Wilcox Production

DUPL. NYPL

DUPL. NYPL

The Merivale Press, Ltd.
26, Noble St., London. E.C.